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TAJIKISTAN

FIRST PERSON

Inspiring the Next Generation

The USAID Civic Education programs have reached over 11,000 students across Tajikistan.



Photo: Project Hope

Shoira (right) observes the voting process during a mock election at the Democracy Summer Camp.

“I was very happy to be involved in a USAID project again. The training provided me with valuable teaching tools, as well as textbooks for my students.”

- Shoira, a teacher of Civic Education and a university student

“Everything started unexpectedly,” says Shoira, a teacher of Civic Education and a university student. She was a tenth grader in Shahritus, Tajikistan, and undecided about her career goals when she saw an advertisement about an IFES Democracy Summer Camp. She decided to apply, and was selected to participate. Shoira, along with other students and a teacher, traveled to a summer resort in the Karatag Valley for an intensive 10-day workshop on democracy and civic participation.

For a woman in Tajikistan—particularly traditional, southern Tajikistan—there are few prospects for a life outside of the home. A school-age girl is expected to set her ambitions on home and family, so the opportunities for career training and higher education are rare, and social pressure against such pursuits can be acute. But for girls like Shoira, the IFES Democracy Summer Camp can open up new doors.

The annual IFES Democracy Summer Camps have become a very popular educational program in Tajikistan. Supported by USAID, the camps have been conducted for five consecutive summers, attracting students from every region of the country. Expert teachers lead classes on issues of democracy and citizenship, including voters’ and human rights, international norms of democracy, and gender issues.

Inspired by the lessons she learned at camp, Shoira decided to enter the Department of History and Law at the Pedagogic University. Shoira is currently a part-time university student, and teaches the IFES-sponsored Civic Education curriculum at her old school in Shahritus. Shoira believes that the summer camp provided her with the necessary knowledge to gain entry into the Pedagogic University. Moreover, it introduced her to effective teaching methods which she presently uses in her classroom.

After the government integrated the IFES Civic Education Course into the national curriculum, Shoira advanced her teaching skills at the USAID-funded IFES training workshop for civic education teachers. USAID supported the drafting, printing, and distribution of Civic Education textbooks and the corresponding teacher’s guide.

Throughout her two years of teaching Shoira has been pleased to see her students become active participants in the life of their local community. “I remember myself as a summer camp participant when I look at my students sometimes,” says Shoira, smiling. And just as surely, when Shoira’s students look at her, they see a new world of possibilities for themselves.